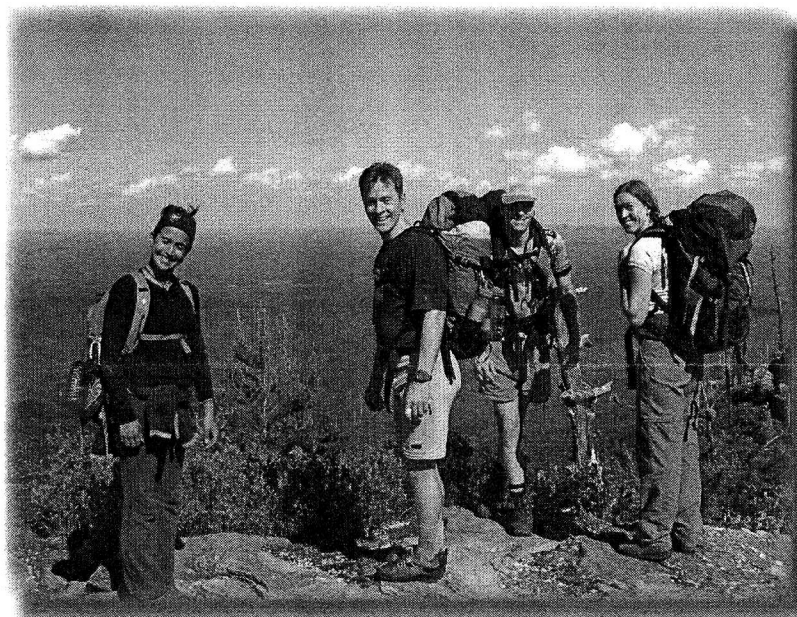


## Linville Gorge - Memorial Day '08

Ross Hess

2008 Volume 63, Issue 2



Ana Gelabert, John Oster, Michael Doyle and Rose Jenkins at Linville Gorge.

We had a great time climbing in the Linville Gorge of North Carolina this past Memorial Day weekend. Participants, by car, included (1) Reed, Ana, and John, (2) Rose and Mike, (3) Scott and Lora, and (4) Jason and myself.

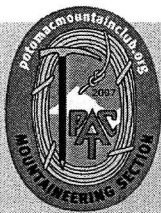
With some time on Friday afternoon, Jason and I headed down to Linville Falls and hiked around. It is definitely a worthwhile side-trip from the campground, with several miles of trails and great views.

The forecast was for clear weather, but Saturday morning surprised us with rain. It stopped and started a few times, but rained most of the morning. We headed up to the Table Rock parking lot to scope out the Amphitheatre. We found the turn-off from the main trail (MST trail), but thought it was further down. After a long hike downhill, we turned around and took the correct turn. Helpful hint: If you start head-

ing down the MST trail steeply, you've gone too far. Also, there is some quartz in the trail, as the guidebook notes, but don't count on seeing three distinct chunks. Finally, it could also be useful to identify the earlier turn for the North Carolina Wall.

Due to the clouds and fog, there was no view, and the rocks were wet, so we decided not to head down into the Amphitheatre and instead hiked back to the parking lot where we met Jim and Kat. The four of us set out to explore Table Rock, with hopes of finding a dry route. We first explored the South End. Of note, the South End path does not directly connect to the East Face, which is not clear in the current guidebook. You can head out to the far right end of the South End, but then you need to back-track to reach the start of the East Face. Near the end of the South End is a mossy wall with a short piece of webbing to help climb the wall; there are just a few routes above that wall.

*continued on next page*



### Inside UpRope

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We noted several climbs along the East Face, and headed up towards the North Ridge. That feature marks the end of the East Face, and also provides great views, so we decided to climb that route.

I would highly recommend climbing the North Ridge (5.5) route; it tops out at the summit, and has great views. The summit of Table Rock is a great place to get your bearings for Linville Gorge. I led the route, which was enjoyable. The first pitch was more technical, while the second one wandered to the summit. The rock formations were quite beautiful.

The day had shaped up considerably, but an unexpected challenge awaited us. We were ready to hike down from the summit to our packs, when an older climber stopped us. He claimed to have been climbing on Table Rock for decades, and directed us to a rap station, telling us we would reach the ground from there with two ropes. Unfortunately, the "expert" was wrong, and I found myself near the end of the ropes with about 60 feet of air to the ground. I pendulumed until I was able to find a reasonable crack for an anchor. Jim and Jason rappelled down to the anchor, and we then lowered Jason to Luncheon Ledge. We later determined that we were part-way up The Cave Route (5.5), and the rings from which we descended were not in the guidebook. There was a small ramp below us, so Jim and I decided to down-climb. I lowered Jim as he placed gear for me; he arrived safely on the ground, then belayed me as I downclimbed (and grumbled). The good news is that we got down safely from a difficult situation, and kept my rack intact.

For the hike out, we went around the north side of Table Rock, where there were many great views, as well as several cliffs not noted in the guidebook. Though Table Rock is a well-known climbing area, and even has a number of bolted routes, it still has a distinct wilderness feel.

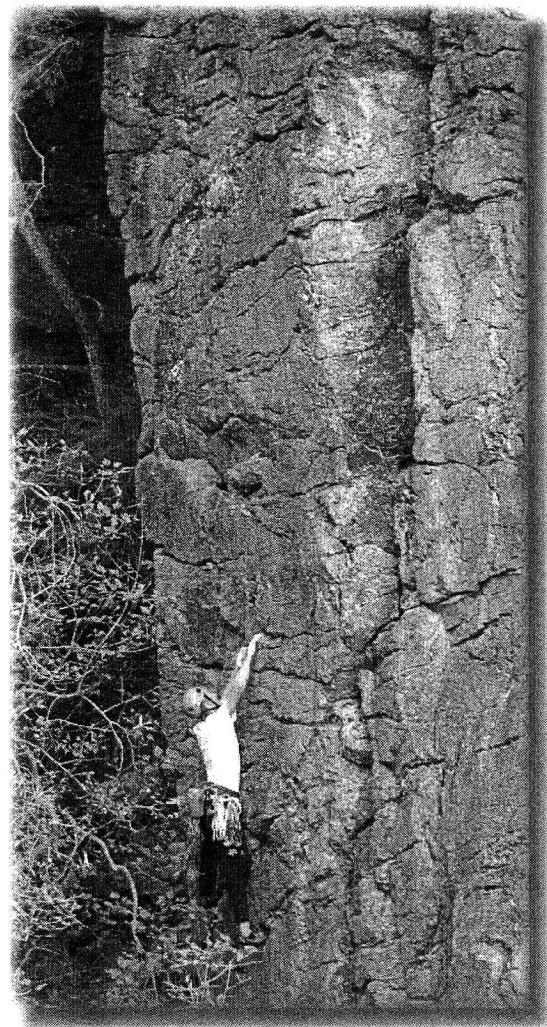
The next day, Sunday, we headed to the Amphitheatre, hiking along the Mountains-to-Sea Trail to the turn-off, and back down to the climbers' trail. At the top of the large flat rock, we traversed across the top of the Reggae Wall, and down the Reggae gully. With a short hike further, we reached the top of the Mummy Buttress—this is a very good place to take a break, get your bearings and stash your pack. From there, we headed down the Mummy gully, which was rather steep; there is fixed gear to rappel an 80' section of the gully, and rappelling is highly recommended.

At the base of the gully, Jason and I saw many other climbers. We had started a bit late, and found climbers on the main routes in the Amphitheatre, so we decided to wait in a short line for The Daddy (5.6). I would highly recommend this climb, which I led. It offered five enjoyable pitches of climbing, a few of which could be linked. The first two pitches were challenging at points, but enjoyable. The third pitch was fairly easy, but led into a difficult fourth pitch. For me, the fourth pitch was difficult due to routefinding; while I noted the correct route while climbing, it did not seem to match with the description in the guidebook. Against my better judgment, I went where I thought the guidebook noted, and found myself in a sea of lichen, and no clear fifth pitch.

With rope drag slowing me down, I decided to set an anchor, and think things through for the next pitch. I decided to climb upwards, and realized that the correct route was perhaps 50' to the right. Unfortunately, protection was poor, and I had made a few committing moves over moss hummocks, so my options were limited. Rather than climb upwards into the unknown, I decided to place a solid piece, and lower towards a traverse. While I hated to aid the route, even at A0, both downclimbing and proceeding upwards were not safe options in this setting. I traversed to the proper belay point, and set an anchor. This afforded us an unplanned extra pitch for the route.

The fifth (or with our mistake, sixth) pitch was the most strenuous, but also the most fun. In the middle, it holds a beautiful corner with a long finger crack. Since it is the last pitch on the route, it would be a great idea to drop a top rope on it for laps in a finger crack. After I topped out, Jason followed and agreed to be lowered to retrieve the piece of gear we left from the earlier misadventure, and climb back to the top. He noted that the route was very run-out, covered with lichen, and overhanging. I had made the right decision by not trying to run it out to the top. Satisfied with a good day of climbing, and a second unexpected challenge in two days, we decided to head back to the car.

On Monday, we headed back to the Amphitheatre to climb both The Mummy and The Prow. Unlike the day before, we were the only two climbers in the Amphitheatre. Also unlike the day before, it became warm very early in the day.





Now familiar with the area, we headed down rather quickly to the base of The Mummy (5.5), which I led. The first section of the first pitch was slabby, and as luck would have it, a bit wet and licheny. With concentration, I made my way to the crack above, and eventually to the belay stance at 150'. I had hoped to climb to the large ledge above, but the pull of the rope forced me to stop. The crack was very enjoyable, with fairly positive holds, and vertical to overhanging most of the way.

We combined the second and third pitches together. It was a short distance to the large ledge, and then a quick climb to the top. I headed right of the arête, opting for the speed of the 5.3 variation. Jason followed to the top, and we rested for a bit atop the Mummy Buttress, scoping The Prow. We had seen others climb off-route the previous day, and we believed that we had found the correct route.

The sun had taken quite a bit out of us, so we decided to hike back to the top of The Prow (5.4) with our packs, and decide whether to climb it. Once there, we found a great view atop the Open Book, and with a short scramble, atop The Prow itself. The views of the Mummy Buttress are just great. Both The Mummy and The Daddy appear very steep from that perspective, and it's hard to believe they are both moderate routes. After lengthy consideration, we decided to hike back to the car. I still regret not having climbed The Prow, but we decided to act with safety in mind while in a wilderness setting. We wanted to avoid a third significant challenge in three days, and our fatigue could have moved us in that direction. As luck would have it, of course, the day became much cooler once we reached the car. We drove back to Greater Washington that night.

I highly recommend the Linville Gorge as a climbing destination. Our focus was moderate routes in a wilderness setting, and the Linville Gorge delivered. There are several tougher routes as well, not to mention several other cliffs in the Gorge and within an hour or two of driving. For those who are willing to explore, the Gorge easily holds decades worth of climbing.

From my end, I do hope to return to climb The Prow, as well as some of the moderate routes on Table Rock. As a change of pace, I might also try to camp in the Gorge, rather than in Linville Falls. It might be possible to link this with a stop at Stone Mountain, or another nearby crag. Most importantly, we had a great time.

**Camping** - When climbing at Linville Gorge, there are two primary camping options: In or around Linville Falls, or at Linville Gorge itself. We arrived at the Linville Falls campground, which is on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Big thanks to Reed, Ana, and John who had arrived earlier and secured two walk-in sites. The campsite itself was fine; there were a few faucets for clean water at a high volume, along with covered restrooms with sinks and flush toilets. There were no showers, and the camp sites were all within sight of one another. The Linville River was a few minutes away, but not close enough to provide ambient noise. There was a mix of tents and RVs, with most campers appearing to be non-climbers.

On showers: Jason and I did stop by the "other" private Linville Falls campsite that advertises showers for \$3, but they told us that they didn't have enough water to honor their advertisement. This was a disappointment, considering that they had advertised this online, and also confirmed this to me on the phone. There are several other campgrounds and cabins in the Linville Falls area. Jim and Kat stayed in a cabin, which they remarked as being rustic.

Other options for camping focus on Linville Gorge. Driving towards the Table Rock parking lot, there are several turn-outs along the road; however, these are small trailheads, rather than simple turn-outs. As such, they should be avoided, unless actually used for trailhead parking.

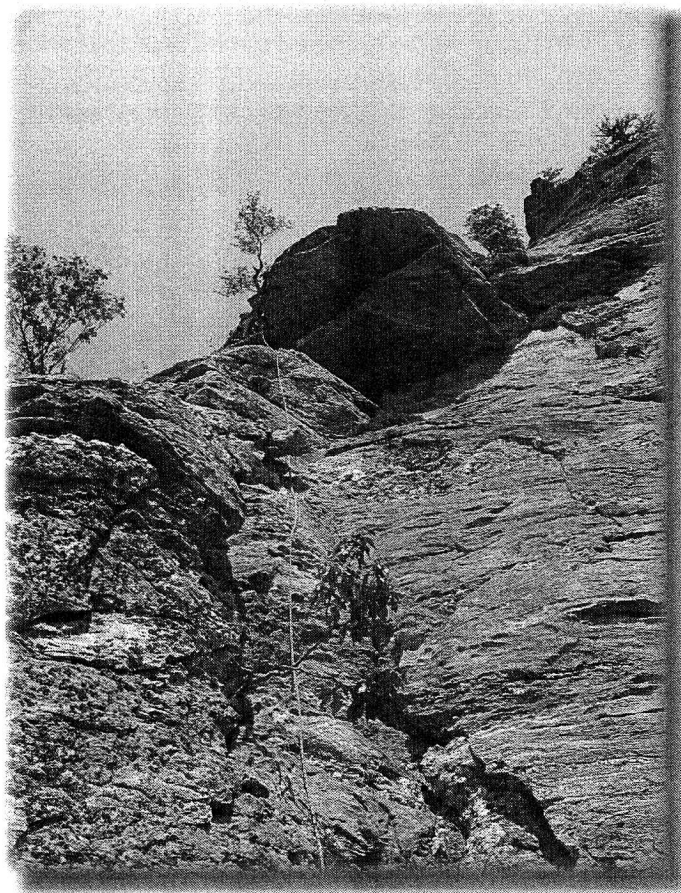
A better option would be parking in the large parking lot at Table Rock, and then hiking to one of the nearby designated camping areas. These areas are only several hundred yards from the trailhead, making the trip from the car to the site rather short. This is important when considering that water is not available. There is a small building with two pit toilets, but no running water. Also, the sites are very close to the main trail, and several tents may be close to one another. Importantly, a wilderness permit is required, which rangers enforce. The main advantage is that you would start the day at Linville Gorge, rather than with a 45-minute drive from Linville Falls to Linville Gorge.

Yet another option would be camping further down the trail towards the cliffs. The benefit would be more seclusion, though these smaller tent sites are still very close to the trail. All of these sites were worn well before leave-no-trace ethics became popular. The challenge would be carrying all needed water a mile or two down the trail.

**Food** - There are two restaurants in Linville Falls. Jason and I ate at one, Spears, which serves a wide variety of food in a white-linen restaurant, but is very welcome to climbers and other dirty people. To that end, our waitress told us about her husband, a climber who recently injured his foot during a fall with a poor belay. Their food was very good, and I would recommend their BBQ Platter. Otherwise, there are a number of other restaurants within a few miles. There were also several small gas stations in the area, including one in Linville Falls.

# Linville Gorge 2

Michael Doyle



Rose and I swapped leads on the climbs for the weekend - she's coming along nicely in learning how to lead. Sunday, we climbed "The Daddy" in 4 pitches - with 60m ropes it can easily be done in 3 (run together pitches 1 & 2, and 4 & 5; I left pitch 5 separate so that Rose could have a good pitch to lead). I then led the Brothers Start (5.7, no pro for the first 20'), running the 2 pitches together to reach a nice ledge just left of "The Mummy" and directly below the Roof Variation (5.7) of the Mummy's last pitch, which Rose led. Unfortunately, we ran out of water at only 2 p.m., so we headed back to the car.

We spent Monday at Table Rock, starting with Blood, Sweat, and Tears (5.7). There is very little 5.7 on it, but the pro was pretty bad in the upper half until the fixed pin. Beautiful view of the Piedmont, though, and a nice warmup. Next, Rose lead the tricky first pitch of Helmet Buttress (5.6) and I did the second (5.6R), while Scott and Lora were on Skip to My Lou, to our left. NOTE: these routes, as well as Jim Dandy, end up at a belay station near Lunch Ledge. It has rings for rappelling but is in a really idiotic spot, unless you do a completely diagonal rap back to the first station on Jim Dandy. People do go straight down the Helmet Buttress, and a tree that the rope then run across shows the scars of it. I left a sling around a tree in order to have a decent rap line.

After lunch Rose led the Cave Route (5.4) up to Lunch Ledge, and after moving the belay I did the first pitch of My Route (5.7, but little of that), doing a hanging belay a little ways above the belay ledge, from which Rose led 25' straight left around a corner in order to reach a big ledge directly below the upper pitch. This last pitch is rather gratuitously bolted (plenty of cracks available). As Ross and Jason were told, the belay stations on My Route are rappable - with 2 ropes. We did not rap Cave Route, but hiked down a steepish trail to the left (when facing down) which leads to the lower section of the trail along the base of the North End.

On Tuesday morning I led White Lightning (5.8+, and casual at this rating). We did split it into 2 pitches, but with judicious use of runners, a single 60m pitch would likely put you at the left end of the big ledge, where you can walk right over to the N. Ridge and rap down (2 ropes required). Rose then led North Ridge, whose lower 2 pitches are easily run together with a 60m rope. There's no rap station at the top of the 3rd pitch (I checked the day before after we got on top via My Route) so we headed down and out.

Whenever I go to an area with which I'm not familiar, I always carry 2 ropes so that we can rappel down with no problems. And in an "older" area like Linville, pitches are 50m long, so we totes along a nice light 9mm 50m rope. Many thanks to Ross for suggesting this trip, to John O. for Amphitheater and camping beta, and my wife Kathleen for taking Colden to show off to relatives for a week, allowing me to go on this trip. And, as always, to Rose for climbing with me, and providing a couple of truly excellent dinners. It was really nice to sit at the campsite in the pleasant evenings to eat, wash up (oh, yeah, sponge baths with warm water from a bucket!), and ready the gear for the next day.



# Linville Gorge 3

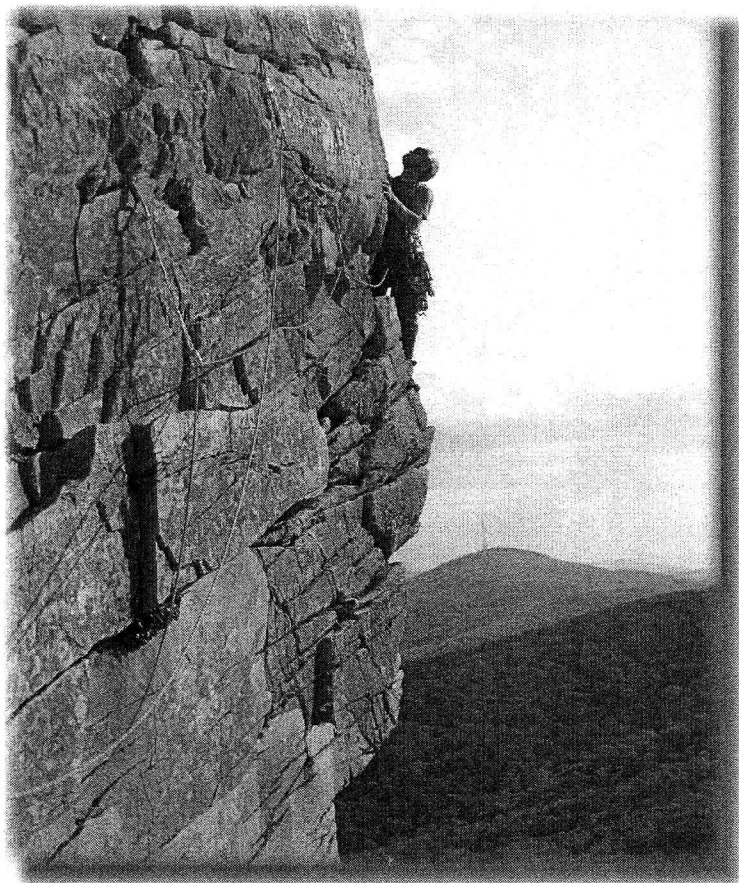
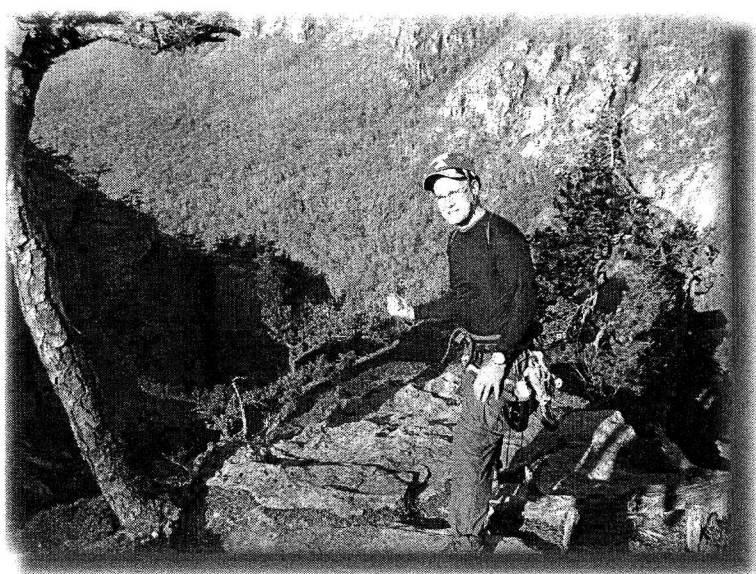
*Reed Bumgarner*

The rope team of Ana Gelabert, John Oster and Reed Bumgarner started from West Falls Church Metro a little after 6 a.m. Friday. Reaching the Linville Falls campground around 2:00, we laid claim to 2 sites and quickly headed for Shiprock, about 14 miles away on the BRP. We started out on Borrowed Time, which John ably led, and later found out was his first 5.9 lead. The bouldery start required some fancy feet and hands, as Ana and Reed can attest. Once up on the ledge above Borrowed Time, we walked about 20 yds right to

the start of Edge of a Dream (5.7) which Reed led. We then rappelled to the ledge and walked off to climber's right. That was it for that short climbing day, and back to the campground for an early night.

The next day's alpine start began with raindrops on the tent. John made us get up anyway and we headed up to Table Rock for scouting and route identification accompanied by Rose, Mike, Lora and Scott. The rain stopped and we went to find the Amphitheater trail turnoff, then spent the rest of the afternoon top roping at the Chimneys. With 2 ropes set up we managed to get about 6 variations of climbs, one of which was a very challenging tight chimney. After Ana, John and I returned to the campground and took a quick cold dip in the river to clean up, we went to dinner at Spear's barbeque.

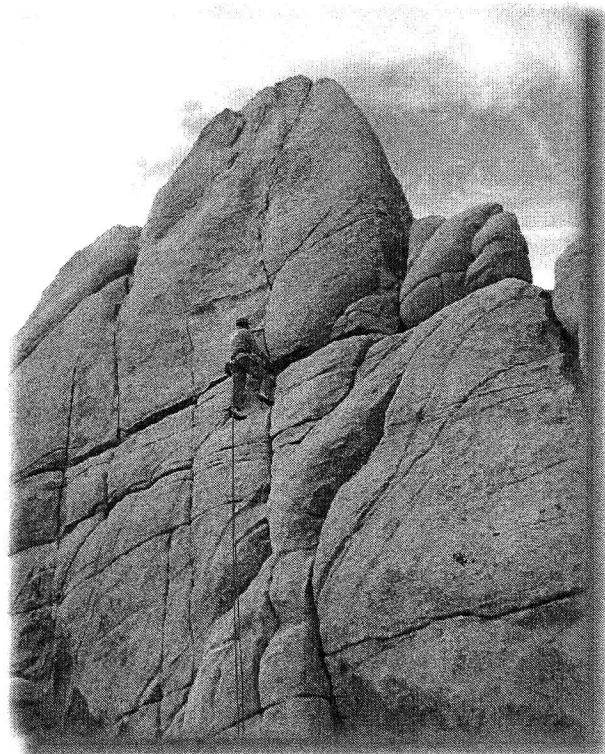
Sunday morning also began at 5:00, which was good, because we used every available photon of light by the time we topped out the last climb. We finished off the Mummy in 2 pitches, with John combining the



first 2 and Reed leading the rest. After rappelling down the gully, we started up the Daddy, John leading p.1 & 2, and Reed leading p.3-5. Since we left packs at the bottom we were committed to rappelling down the gully again and finishing the day on the Prow. We started the route on a large treed ledge to avoid the lower pitches and John led the entire way. Headlamps were lit during the latter part of the final pitch and the walkout was in the dark past an angry rattlesnake whose dinner Lora and Scott had disturbed earlier. According to their account, the rattler was in the middle of the trail trying to swallow a rodent when they met it. The snake then coughed up its dinner and prepared to deal with the newcomers, who stepped gingerly around it. All in all this was a most ambitious day, especially for a rope team of three climbing with 60m half ropes. The Mummy and Daddy, especially, were both fun and steep, with the grades seeming somewhat softer than Seneca grades. Our team worked very well together and we look forward to climbing together again. Thanks again to Ross for putting things together on this trip!

# Joshua Tree

Ana Gelabert



I really wish I could return to those precious sunny days I had in the high desert of Joshua Tree this past Spring. It was by far the best vacation I've had since childbirth - four days of climbing to myself without time constraints.

I met for a day with Steve Gerberding; we climbed Sail Away 5.8, Wild Winds 5.9, Count your fingers on Thin Wall, Double Cross 5.8, The Flake on Intersection Rock and three other routes on Turtle Rock.

Then with Carlos Carro Dupla we climbed for two days including routes like The Cryptic 5.8 and Southwest Corner 5.6 on headstone, The Eye on Cyclops (looked like a pelvis to me more than an eye), and Toe Jam. We also did climbs on Echo Rock, Hemmingway buttress called Frosty Cone 5.7, Lazy Day 5.7 on Hall of Horrors, and Ride On 5.5 which had 4 pitches.

I climbed with my family on Eschar 5.4 and top roped Bimbo (5.10-almost died-didn't know it was that rated), and then after that, we went to Buckets to Burbank 5.8 and called it a day at the Hall of Horrors. Very special thanks to Carlos Carro Dupla who climbed with me and who kept me safe. He was a complete gentleman to me and my family. Thank you Carlos!

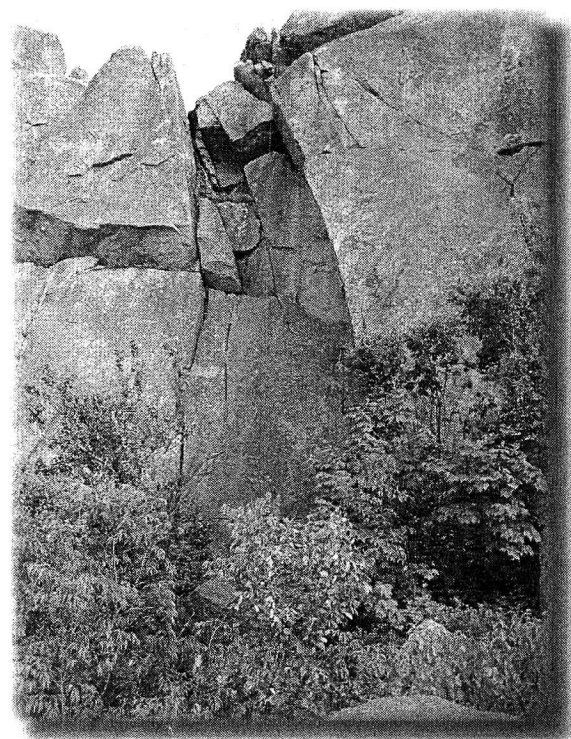
# Old Rag

Michael Doyle

After a long absence, I was back at Old Rag, and had the pleasure of showing some fine granite to Jim McClave. It was great to climb with another partner from the PATC-MS, and one who enjoys both the climbing and the hike in. Great to find that he's getting into the alpine game, as well.

We started at the PATC Wall, warming up on Fern Crack & Vegemite, before sinking excellent jams into Rusty Bong, with Jim on-sight cleaning The Bong - no rests needed for him! He then led Keyhole Left, setting his first Big Bro along the way. After lunch we did an interesting variation - I led Dobey Gillis and traversed along the entire underside of the Great Roof and set a belay at the half-way point of Bombay Crack: excellent traversing practice. Jim on-sight cleaned Dobey and then led the next pitch up the Bombay.

By now we'd had enough of the noise from the enormous number of folks hiking atop the wall so headed for the solitude at Sunshine Buttress to end the day, enjoying the rope-length pitches of Enthalpy (5.8) and Rover, Red Rover (5.7-). Altogether a really great day - Old Rag granite was for me like water to a wanderer in the desert...and Jim enjoyed himself as well, finally doing some climbing on a peak he's hiked on many occasions.

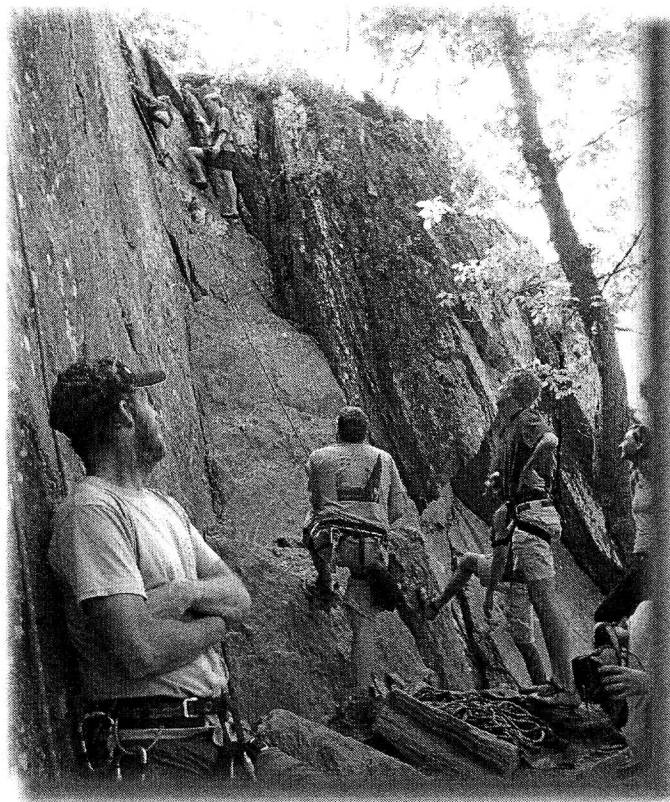
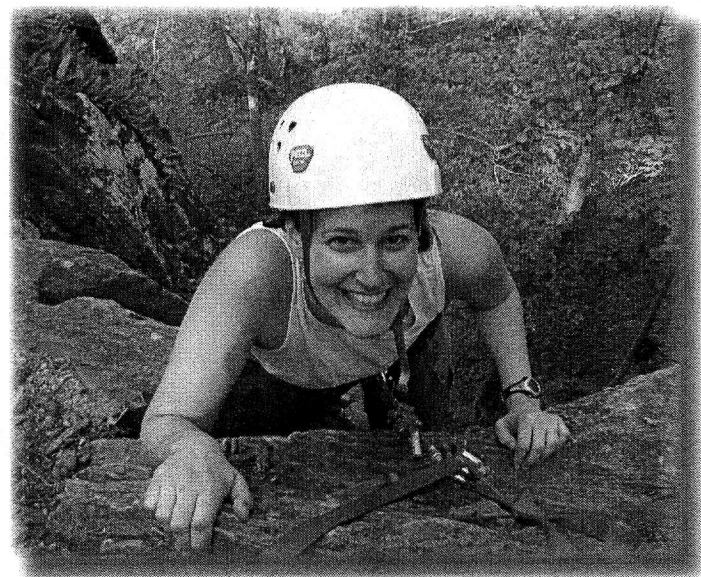




# New Climber Day

Carderock

Annette Rebellato

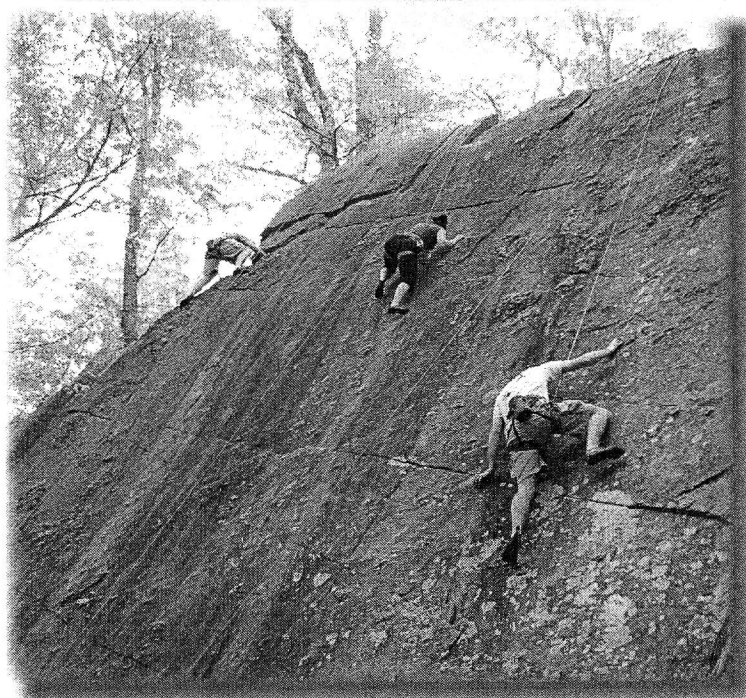


New Climber Day '08 started pretty early for some PMC members. Joe and I arrived at Carderock a few minutes after 7 am, soon followed by Bill, Eric, Tim...and the quickly arriving group of new climbers. As always, we were unsure of how many people would actually participate, but we should NOT have worried - the final tally of waiver's signed was...48! Nope, not a typo, there were 48 NEW climbers (to the PMC) at Carderock, along with about 15 or so PMC members. This was an amazing day and could NOT have been such a success without those noted above, as well as Vo, Jason, Naz, Jack and I'm sure a couple other PMC members I'm forgetting about who were a huge help in setting up additional ropes, belaying our huge number of attendees, giving instruction, etc. THANKS so much to you all!

We had Carder pretty blanketed! We had 11 ropes set up: Jan's Face, Sterling Crack, Ronnie's Leap, Beginner's Crack, The Nose, Kindergarten, Green Bucket/Desperation, The Crack, Laundry Chute, Butterfly/Easy Layback and Trudie's Terror! Our easiest routes were soon being conquered by a great number of new climbers who had faces of pure amazement at their accomplishment, and the slightly more difficult routes were soon being tried by many!

This was my second year helping to hold this event, and it is a fantastic event that can only grow and garner more attention for our club! We were VERY lucky that Bill Dudley (our hero!) brought his HUGE stash of gear to borrow. Without this, there would have been alot of eager climbers waiting around to share harnesses and shoes! Thanks thanks thanks again to everyone who made it out for this VERY fun event!!!

Turn to page 10 for more pictures!

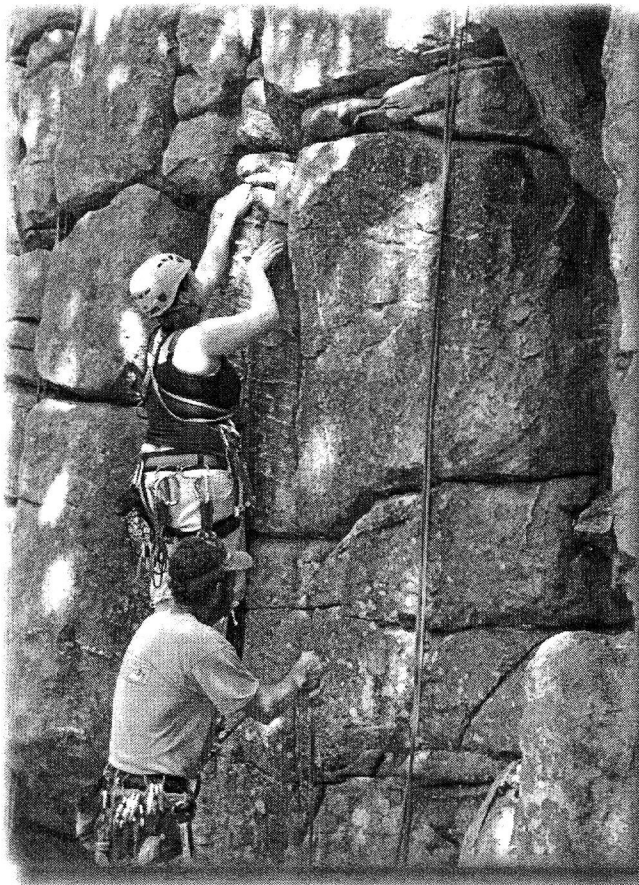




# New Leader Day

Sugarloaf Mountain

Annette Rebellato



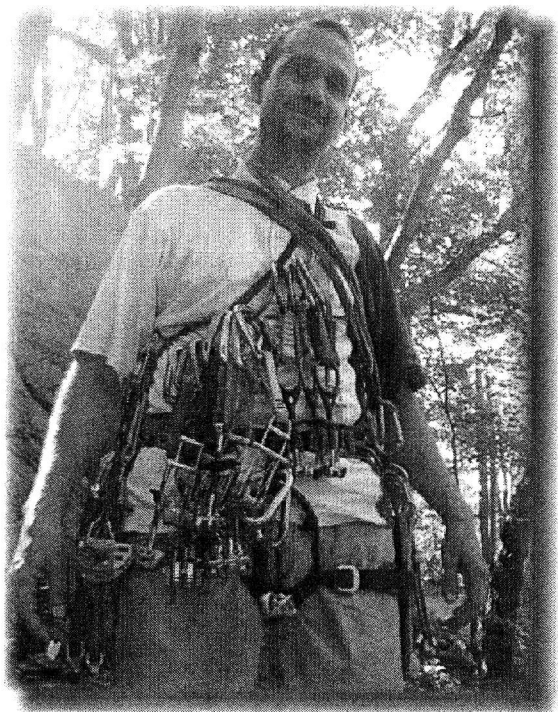
Bill Dudley, our own personal PMC rockstar guide, offered to lead another great trip this year, and many PMC members jumped at the chance for this free instruction (me among them). Bill quickly filled all the slots for his New Leader Day, and had a great group of more experienced leaders to come along and help out. As a new leader who has primarily learned from one source, I found it great to learn from Bill, Jeannette, (INSERT OTHER NAMES HERE) as each person has their own preferences, tips and tricks to help us learn more. For the first part of the day, the group gathered at the (WEST?) view parking lot at Sugarloaf and went over knots, anchor building and gear placement. We then packed up and headed towards the Boy Scout Wall (CHECK) to do some work on the rock.

Bill quickly had us spread all over the rock placing gear, getting the hang of nut and cam placements, having the different leaders come around and talk to us about how well each piece was set, if there were better options for placement, etc. Next was some full anchor building, and again we spread out to set anchors, using the different methods of equalizing and learning how well each one worked. Again, all the different leaders walked around and offered their own insight into their preferred way to build anchors, while also showing the other options available.

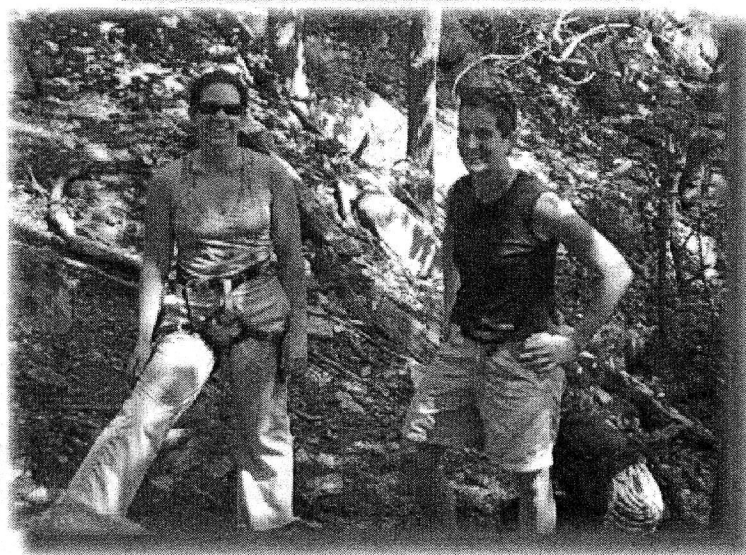
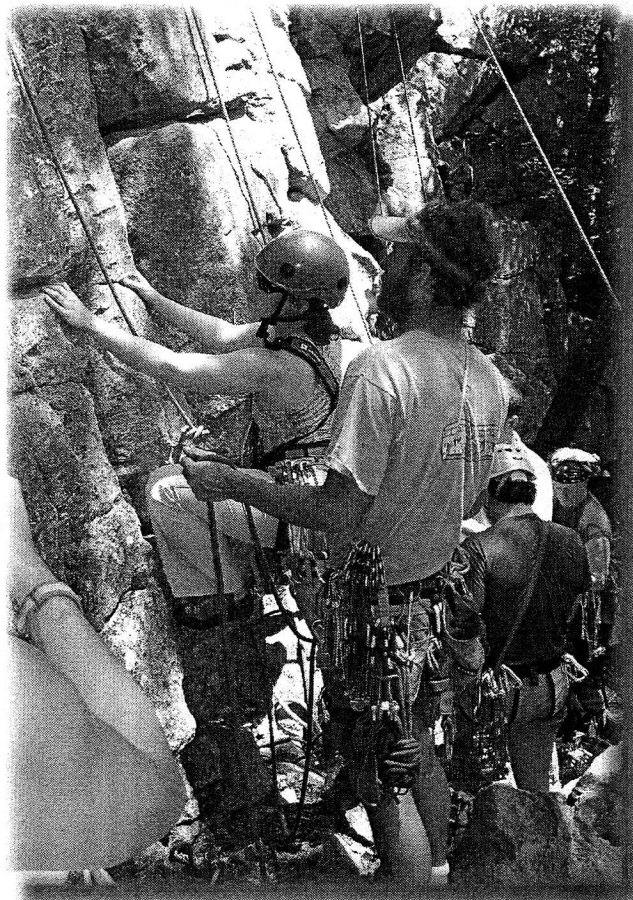
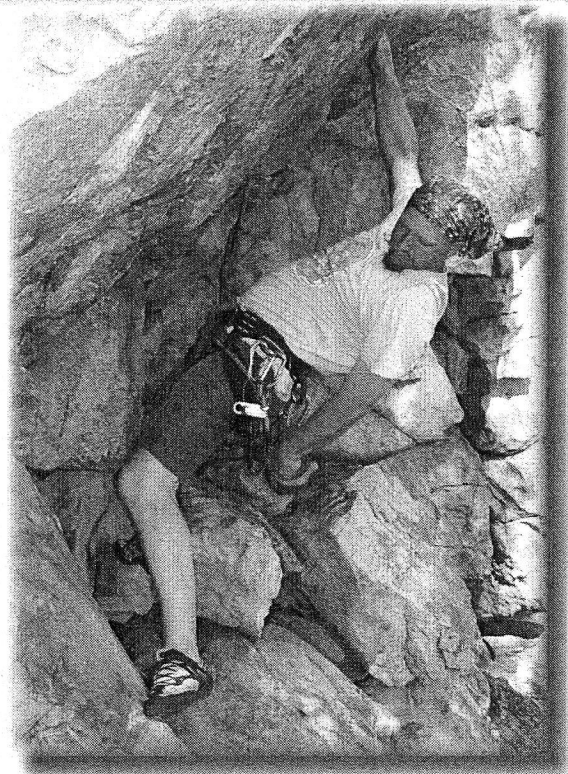
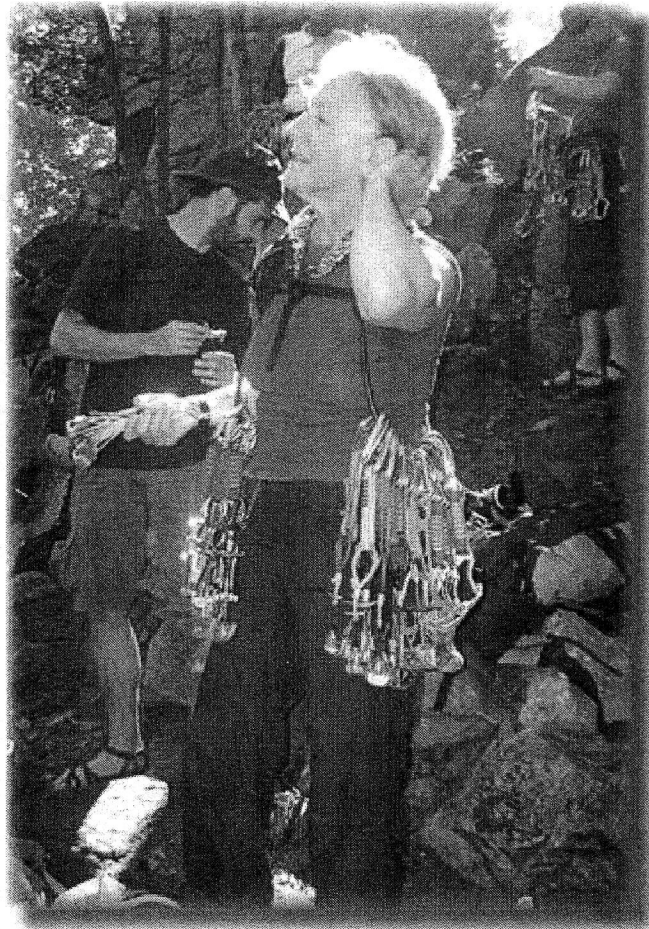
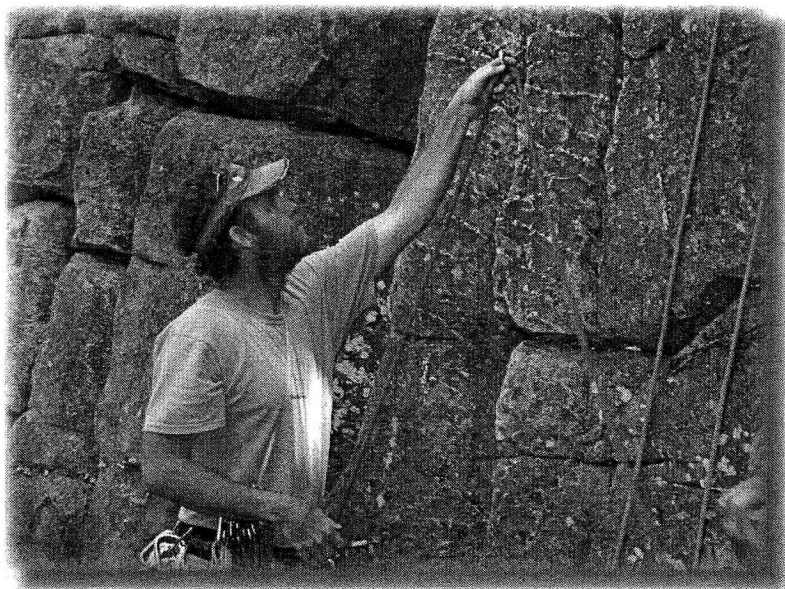
Then it was time to climb! Most of the group had not done any trad leading before, so many did "mock" leads while a few went ahead and did a full trad lead climb. Bill and the others belayed us new leaders, offering advice and encouragement along the way. Soon we were scaling the walls and setting gear like the pros!

The climbing went on for much of the day, and when I left there were still PMC members leading climbs and a few even top-roping some of the tougher routes in our area. I would definitely suggest Cub Scout Crack and (OTHER NAME HERE) as tremendous beginner lead climbs. I've only done a half-dozen or so leads and these were great routes for this level - great opportunity for pro, solid rest spots and fun rock to climb as well!

A huge thanks again to Bill for suggesting and leading this trip, and all the other leaders who took time out to help the rest of us take the sharp end!

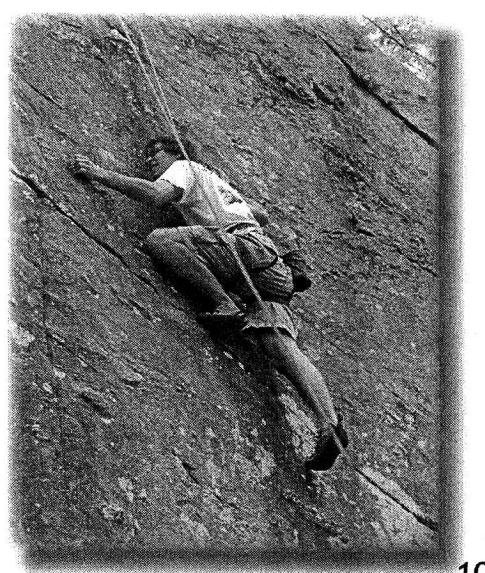
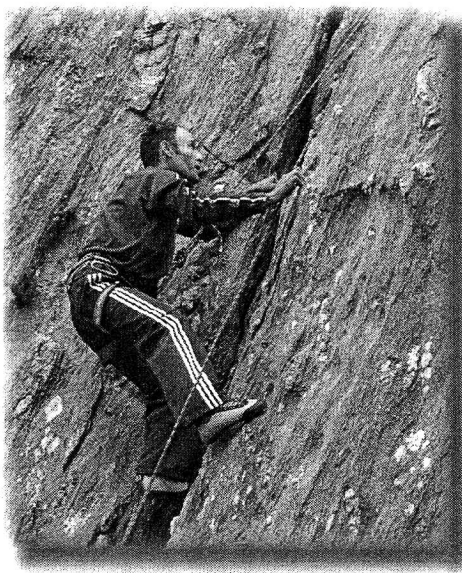
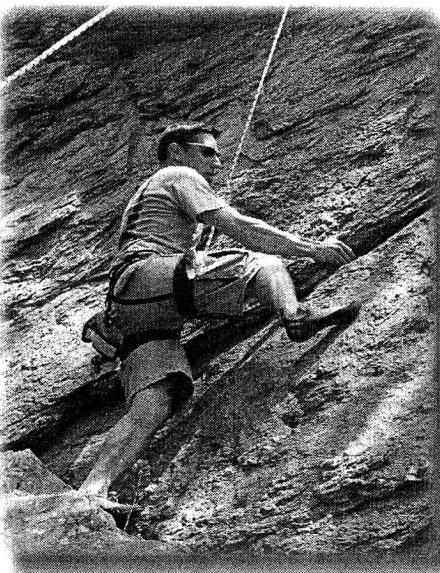
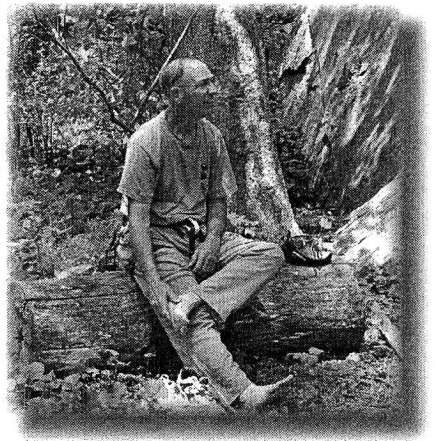
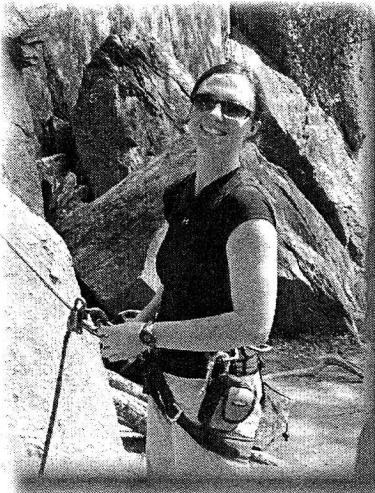
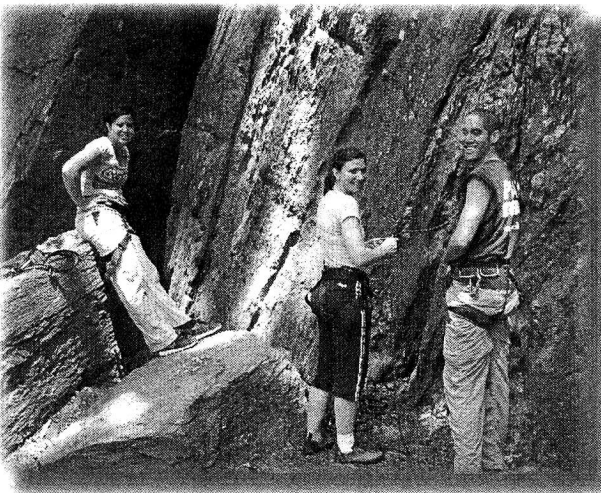
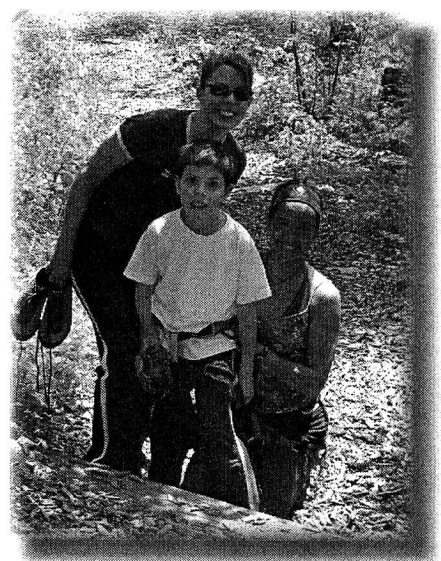
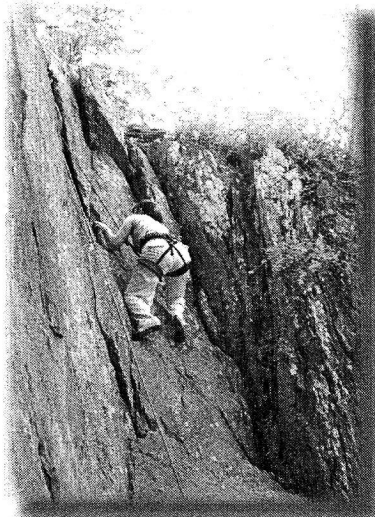
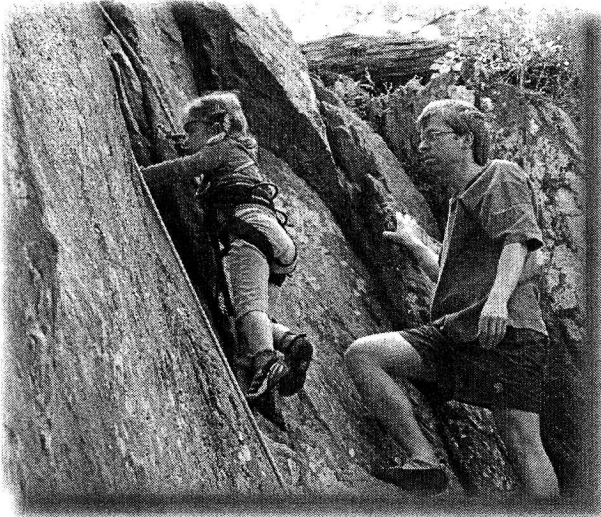








## More New Climber Day Photos





## Odds & Ends

### UpRope Newsletter Submission Guidelines

Please send all trip reports to Netty88@msn.com - either as a separate email or as a CC to the listserve. Please put in the subject line TRIP REPORT: Name i.e. TRIP REPORT: Seneca.

Please include FULL first and last name of the story writer, and full names of as many club attendees' as possible. If you have it, logistics information such as guiding services, campgrounds, restaurants, etc would be useful at the end of the story. I will edit trip reports for grammar, conciseness and length when necessary.

Any word processing program is acceptable (i.e. Word, Works, Wordperfect) and preferable to emailed stories - although these can be used if necessary.

### Pictures:

Hi-res digital images only, please, .jpg or .tiff formats work best. Please provide original whenever possible - I can crop or color-correct also if necessary. Original compressed 72 dpi or uncompressed 300 dpi images are best.

If images are too large for email, use a 3rd party site such as YouSendIt.com. If you have a downloadable photo site, please let me know the web address where the images are stored, which ones you would like used (if you have a preference) or which albums I can choose from.

Please also list WHO is in each photo, and who took it if you would like a photo credit. Please do not insert/imbed images, but send as separate attachment.

### Additional submission categories:

Please feel free to submit more than trip reports; would like to start including reviews on things from new gear to gyms or campsites visited as well as books or magazines. Books can be fiction, nonfiction or even guidebooks.

## 2008 MOUNTAINEERING SECTION CLUB OFFICIALS

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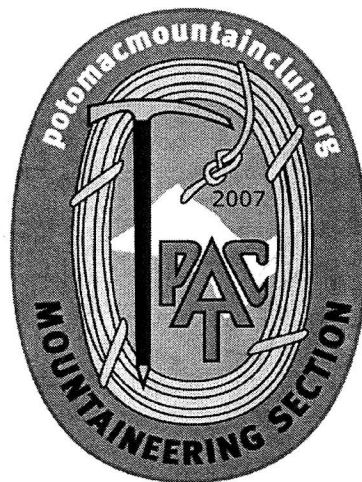
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### UpRope NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 16377

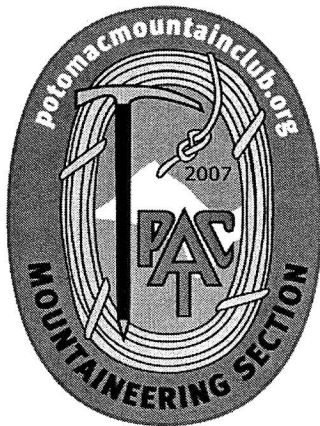
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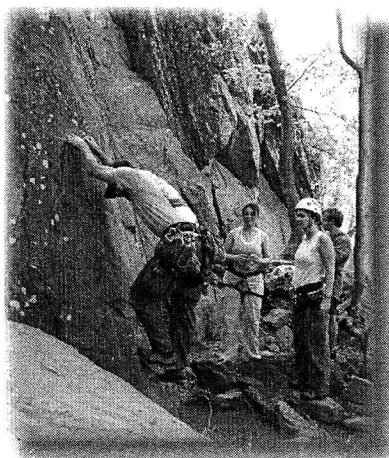
# UpRope Newlsetter

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[www.PotomacMountainClub.org](http://www.PotomacMountainClub.org)



New Climber and New Leader Days - Check inside for the complete story...



THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE POTOMAC APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB - MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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